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Chairman: Mr. Margarian (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Armenia)

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In the absence of Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Mr. Margarian (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 56: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/63/38, A/63/215 and A/63/222)

(a) **Advancement of women** (*continued*) (A/63/205, A/63/214, A/63/216 and A/63/364)

(b) **Follow-up to the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/63/217)

1. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), said that the GCC had always focused on improving the status of women by promoting their greater participation in leadership and decision-making positions, as well as in the development of society, while still ensuring that Arab and Islamic values and principles were maintained. Continuous research on women's issues was essential, as was the establishment of statistical databases in support of policy formulation and planning relating to women. In conformity with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and taking into account both the sharia and national values, the Gulf States had prepared national action plans and firmly believed that promotion of the rights of girl children and women depended on consolidating the rights and duties of the family, which was the natural and fundamental group unit of society, as provided in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, before it was ever embodied as such in international instruments. The Gulf States had also established mechanisms for empowering women, as well as councils and entities specializing in women's issues.

2. In the context of following up the recommendations of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the GCC Supreme Council, at its twenty-third session, had instructed the GCC Consultative Commission to review actions taken by member States to improve the status of women, specifically in the social and economic fields, to which end a committee had been established to conduct a study on the economic, social and family role of women. On the basis of the study's findings, the GCC had elaborated a programme of action, with particular emphasis on women's economic empowerment.

3. In the social context, the GCC States sought, inter alia, to assist low-income women and women heads of household, to protect women against all forms of violence and to eradicate illiteracy among girl children and women, in line with the tenets of the sharia. A ministerial committee tasked with coordinating activities among the GCC States was also planned.

4. Qatar welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/214) on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and supported the global campaign launched to that end. It was essential to emphasize, however, that no single model was applicable to all countries, each of which should instead find its own appropriate ways of confronting violence against women. The GCC States had integrated into their national plans and programmes measures designed to eliminate domestic violence in general and violence against children and women in particular. They had also reviewed their legislation for the explicit purpose of criminalizing such offences. The GCC States furthermore supported the measures set forth in the report on activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/63/205).

5. It was vital to establish legal and operational mechanisms to combat trafficking in women and girls. For their part, the GCC States had created the necessary legal frameworks and acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Moreover, their penal codes explicitly criminalized trafficking in persons. In the context of cooperation among the GCC States, the GCC Supreme Council had, in 2006, adopted a document relating to a temporary law on trafficking in persons that penalized offenders, whether natural or corporate persons, and provided for the establishment of a national committee to combat such trafficking.

6. The persistent conflicts in various parts of the world were a major impediment to the elimination of violence and abuse of which women were victims. In that regard, she stressed that reports by the Secretary-General should devote special attention to the plight of women and their families living under foreign occupation and that a solution to their tragic fate should be urgently found.

7. **Ms. Pérez Alvarez** (Cuba) said that, despite the progress that had been achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, much remained to be done to reduce feminized poverty and thus to overcome the obstacles to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

8. Without measures to remedy the structural crisis resulting from globalization — which affected both the developing countries and the major world economic powers — and to achieve equitable and sustainable development as a means of eliminating poverty, there could be no question of equality between the sexes or the empowerment of women. Well before the adoption of those international instruments, Cuba had been promoting the rights of women who, as the most recent statistics showed, played a very significant role in all sectors of society. Cuba had also been the first country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the second to ratify it and remained committed to following up the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

9. Her delegation repudiated violence against women, particularly violence resulting from conflicts, foreign occupation and the application of unilateral coercive measures such as the economic, commercial and financial embargo which, for almost 50 years, had been imposed on Cuba by the United States of America and recalled in that connection the sufferings of Cuban women whose husbands, fathers or sons had been arbitrarily detained in the United States over the past decade or so.

10. Emphasizing the importance of international cooperation, she pointed out that the attainment of the right to development by the countries of the South had become essential to the very survival of those of the North. Those countries should work together as a matter of urgency to find solutions to the devastating crisis that affected the entire world. Cuba intended to continue to contribute selflessly to regional cooperation initiatives and affirmed the sincerity of the efforts being made by Cubans on behalf of men and women in the other countries of the South.

11. **Ms. Banna** (Iraq) said that, because of the greater emphasis placed on human rights, the protection of women's rights was among the priorities of the international community. Throughout decades of dictatorship, Iraqi women had suffered from oppression, privations and exclusion, and from numerous forms of violence. Today, Iraq was seeking to restore the balance through the participation of women in all areas of national life. Given Iraq's yearning, in particular, for peace, security and democracy, such participation was now a pressing priority issue.

12. Iraqi women had shown how courageous they could be in the face of terrorism and violence by assuming their family and professional responsibilities and by participating in elections and in the drafting of the Constitution. The Government was aware that women accounted for half of the population and encouraged them to remain engaged. Article 49 of the Constitution guaranteed the inalienable rights of Iraqi women and a percentage of representation for women of not less than one quarter of the members of the Council of Representatives, a proportion which had not been achieved even in many developed countries. Four ministerial portfolios were currently held by women and there was a Ministry for Women's Affairs and a Parliamentary Commission on Women. The rights of women within the family and in employment and their right to social protection and health care were also guaranteed by legislation and under the Constitution women were entitled to transmit their nationality to their children if they married non-Iraqis, something that was without precedent in the region. The prohibition on travel abroad by women unaccompanied by a man had been lifted and several articles of the new Constitution supported the equality of the sexes whether in the case of participation in public affairs, political rights or access to health care and accommodation. Women were also increasingly represented in the diplomatic corps and in missions and official delegations abroad.

13. In cooperation with the United Nations system, the Iraqi Government had begun to make the members of the High-level National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women aware in particular of the problem of violence against women, of the importance of integrating women in political life and of their rights with regard to earnings.

14. The Government honoured outstanding women who assisted displaced families, especially women-headed households, by offering them a social safety net; it also helped non-governmental organizations

involved in the protecting and strengthening of women's rights

15. Iraq was one of the Arab countries that had made progress towards the introduction of gender equality but it needed the support of the international community in order to usher in a climate of stability and security.

16. **Ms. Kurosaki** (Japan) said that her Government had been actively engaged in promoting a gender-equal society and drew attention in particular to the Government's efforts to eliminate violence against women in conflict situations which remained a pervasive phenomenon that the international community needed to tackle in a comprehensive and concerted manner. In that connection, her country warmly welcomed the recent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1820 (2008) of which Japan had been a sponsor.

17. The prevention of conflicts depended on the participation of women and men as equals in the negotiation of peace agreements and both should be provided with peace education. It was also necessary to integrate a gender perspective into national legislation, policy and structure. Japan was aware that women should not be viewed merely as victims of violence but that they also had a key role to play in peacebuilding and her country provided a major contribution in several countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Eritrea and Afghanistan.

18. At the international level, her country had been an active participant in the campaigns led by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General. It was itself conducting an annual campaign to eliminate violence against women and would be participating in the UNIFEM campaign at the ministerial level.

19. In the context of action at the national level, she recalled that 2009 would mark the tenth anniversary of the enactment of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society in Japan and drew attention to various measures adopted by her Government to promote a work-life balance, in particular by strengthening the social infrastructure to assist young parents.

20. Much remained to be done to promote gender mainstreaming throughout society and her country reaffirmed its desire to participate actively with the international community in action to achieve that objective.

21. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan), recalling the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, said that his country, on the basis of its cultural heritage and its commitment to the principles of equality between the sexes, recognized the important role played by women as a pillar of social renewal. Women had been participants on the political scene since the 1960s and 25 seats in Parliament were set aside for them. Since the 1970s, their right to equal pay for equal work had also been recognized and the same age of retirement had been set for all. Today, women had a better standard of education, were more active in economic life and held senior posts in many sectors.

22. His delegation appreciated the role and efforts of UNIFEM and urged donors to increase their contributions in order to promote activities for the empowerment and advancement of women, in particular in accordance with the MDGs.

23. Various United Nations bodies were monitoring the status of Palestinian women who were victims of the blockade and of flagrant violations of their rights under Israeli occupation and his country considered that there was a need for international awareness and for action to put an end to such practices and to protect the rights and dignity of Palestinian women. Major progress had been made with respect to the advancement and empowerment of women thanks to the efforts made at all levels but many challenges remained which could not be taken up solely at the national level. There was a need to strengthen cooperation mechanisms, and to promote the rights of peoples to development and to the ownership of their resources and donor countries should honour their commitments by releasing the sums promised under official development assistance, alleviate the debt of the least developed countries, adopt pro-poor international economic policies and put an end to economic blockades which were prejudicial to peoples and to the empowerment and advancement of women.

24. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) pointed out the importance of gender equality to sustainable development and said that the gender perspective should be mainstreamed into all United Nations activities relating to climate change, the food and energy crises, as well as the deliberations of all major conferences.

25. It was critically important that women should play an enhanced role in the agricultural sector as they were the agents of change and should be in a position to take decisions concerning the formulation and implementation of national development strategies. His country had always played a pioneering role in the advancement of women in accordance with its international commitments. It was a party to almost all the international instruments relating to women's rights and played an active part in the work, in particular, of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It had comprehensive machinery to promote the advancement of women and to eradicate poverty and he announced in that connection the imminent implementation of a more focused policy. Noting that Goal 3 of the MDGs had been achieved, he emphasized that gender issues had been duly considered and mainstreamed in relation to other MDGs.

26. Access to microcredit and non-formal education had increased the rate of employment among women in both the formal and informal sectors and the statistics showed that about 30 per cent of rural households were now headed by women. At the political level, women enjoyed independence and were eligible to contest elections to the national Parliament and to other bodies in which a number of seats were earmarked for them. A number of laws had been enacted to protect them against violence and his country planned in 2008 to launch a national campaign similar to that of the Secretary-General. In that connection, the Peacebuilding Commission should fully implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in order to improve the status of women affected by conflict.

27. Despite the intense efforts that were being made and the success that had been achieved, no country had yet managed to eliminate gender disparity and to align its national policies with the international objectives set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. The developing countries were home to a majority of the world's poor womenfolk and international cooperation, resource mobilization and stronger global partnership were essential to them.

28. **Mr. Steeghs** (Netherlands) said that the food crisis, which had complex causes, affected women throughout the world. While the world's food stocks had been shrinking, food consumption had been growing and the world's population, which stood at 6 billion, would rise to 9 billion by 2050. Poverty would spread, leading to food insecurity and political unrest. Women made up the majority of poor and excluded people, but accounted for 80 to 90 per cent of food production and were therefore most affected by the food crisis. The crisis must be addressed if Millennium Development Goal 3 was to be achieved.

29. The food crisis had already resulted in riots and instability in 40 countries, bringing to mind the warning of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Not only did the crisis have damaging effects on infrastructure, which contributed to ensuring gender equality, but it also jeopardized access to education, especially for girls.

30. He called on all countries to immediately commit to promoting equal access to land ownership, ensuring women's access to education, agricultural resources, water, technology and credit, and giving women an equal voice in decision-making.

31. Discriminatory practices and legislation must be done away with to enable women to fully play their role in agriculture and food production. It was also crucial to inter alia adopt measures that protected small-scale farmers and local products rather than aggressive multinational companies, to coordinate demand-driven assistance internationally and to continue to invest in water supply systems.

32. The Netherlands called for closer cooperation in implementing the recommendations of the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals. Governments must ensure access to food and pay particular attention to the equal rights of men and women in developing national and international food security policies.

33. **Mr. Maierá** (Brazil) said that his country had adopted a second national plan of policies for women, which covered 11 key areas and was founded on the principles of gender equality, the empowerment of women, a secular State, social justice for all, transparency in public management, respect for diversity and the participation of civil society.

34. Brazil had also adopted a National Pact to Curb Violence against Women, with a four-year budget of US$ 600 million, as well as a mechanism and programmes aimed at protecting women victims of violence; promoting the sexual and reproductive rights of women and countering the feminization of

HIV/AIDS; combating the sexual exploitation of girls and teenagers and the trafficking in women; and improving the situation of women in prisons, including ensuring that their rights were respected.

35. He reaffirmed his delegation's recognition of the work of the United Nations system in the area of the advancement of women.

36. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her country attached great importance to the advancement of women. It had mainstreamed a gender perspective in its 2006-2010 national development plan and had strengthened its legislation to empower women, with a view to reducing women's vulnerability to violence.

37. The implementation of Colombia's Democratic Security Policy and the demobilization of more than 48,000 former members of illegal armed groups had made it possible to gradually reduce violence and all forms of criminal activity, and to restore confidence and stability. The Government had strengthened its policy on assistance to internally displaced persons, which received an annual budget of $500 million and incorporated a gender perspective, pursuant to the national action plan for human rights.

38. Colombia had strengthened its legislation on domestic violence and trafficking in persons. The Children's and Adolescents' Code provided for measures to protect victims and severely punish those found guilty of violence against children. A number of policies and strategies had also been developed to promote the rights of women within the justice system; for example, a new adversary system had been established to expedite criminal procedure and to better protect the rights of victims. An observatory on gender issues had been established to monitor the implementation of national laws and policies and to collect data on violence against women.

39. International cooperation was especially crucial to support national initiatives; the United Nations had a key role to play in that regard. Colombia welcomed continued joint efforts in favour of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

40. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) expressed concern at the delay in publishing the reports of the Secretary-General on agenda item 56, including the report entitled "Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system" (A/63/364), which his delegation had been intending to study in detail.

41. Recalling several major initiatives of the international community, he said there appeared to be an international consensus that it was a priority, and a matter of urgency, to improve the status of women in the United Nations system, but that deliberations in the Commission on the Status of Women were lagging behind international commitment in that regard.

42. The consultations which had taken place during the two high-level meetings on Africa's development needs and on achieving MDGs had once more shown that women continued to suffer from poverty, discrimination and violence, especially in regions affected by armed conflict or under foreign occupation. The slow progress in achieving MDG 3 by 2015 was a matter of concern, and all the developed and developing countries must join the campaign to that end launched by the Secretary-General in March 2008.

43. The successive economic crises and the steep rise in food and energy prices, along with climate change and the chaos on the world's currency markets, had adversely affected the ability of Member States to strengthen their development agenda, and would certainly affect their ability to fulfil their obligations to promote equality between the sexes.

44. Egypt was convinced that society could not advance without improving the status of women, and was determined to fully empower women. It had established the necessary national mechanisms for that purpose, including a National Council for Women, whose work had made it possible for women to become ambassadors or judges, and to play a full part in designing and implementing national policies. The National Council for Women had also formulated recommendations which had been transmitted to the Commission on the Status of Women. Another example was the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, whose numerous national action plans promoted equality in education and the improvement of health services for girls, especially to prevent violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

45. The empowerment of women called for cooperation among all national authorities and civil society institutions. Egypt had decided to incorporate a gender perspective into all its policies and public strategies, and to make provision for it in its budget. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that international efforts for the advancement of women would be

intensified and thereby permit the achievement of development goals.

46. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) noted the key role of the United Nations and of the intergovernmental processes in the advancement of women, and the noteworthy progress which had been achieved recently. National and international strategies should place greater emphasis on mothers, whose situation could only be improved by guaranteeing women's equal rights in employment and education. That also had a bearing on children, because a child's quality of life depended largely on his or her mother's social development.

47. The strength of a State depended on that of families. His country had implemented a national gender equality action plan focused on protecting mothers, and its results showed that Belarus was among the leading developed countries in that respect, ahead of many other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Europe. His Government had introduced social welfare payments for families, and was helping mothers of large families in their working lives, for example by enabling mothers of five children to retire five years earlier. Large families were also able to obtain loans on generous terms to finance their children's higher education at public universities.

48. The development of quality health care was a key element in the efforts to improve life for mothers. Belarus had established an independent research centre on maternal and child welfare, training centres and a specialist library equipped to address the needs of pregnant women and young mothers.

49. With a view to enhancing the status of mothers, Belarus had declared 2006 "Mothers' Year" and since then had been awarding a medal and a substantial bonus to mothers of five children; other measures were in place locally for mothers of large families.

50. The situation of mothers showed how important it was that international and national strategies should provide not only for gender equality, but also for the various social categories of women. He urged the United Nations system, in its efforts to promote equality, to make greater provision for the specific needs of women.

51. **Mr. McMahan** (United States of America) noted, that while much remained to be done, important steps had been taken in recent years to promote gender equality and end violence against women. He referred in particular to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council regarding the use of sexual violence in armed conflict, including General Assembly resolution 62/134. It was regrettable that the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/216) had not devoted more attention to the matter; however, his delegation welcomed the description of the existing legal systems and protections for victims.

52. The United States welcomed the report being prepared by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the follow-up to Security Council resolution 1820 (2008). The Department should draw upon the inter-agency resources related to the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict so that the work of the experts could be as effective as possible.

53. The establishment in 2006 of the Women Leaders' Working Group was also welcome. Their work made a substantial contribution to the elimination of sexual violence against women.

54. As a result of its significant concern over the steady rise in the number of women affected by HIV/AIDS, the United States Government had reauthorized the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief for another five years with a budget of US$ 48 billion to finance antiretroviral treatment, care for 5 million orphans and vulnerable children, and the training of at least 140,000 additional health-care workers.

55. Combating human trafficking was another major focus of United States Government policy to put an end to violence against women, as evidenced by the increase in the number of anti-trafficking task forces, the rise in the number of prosecutions and convictions of traffickers, and the large number of trafficking victims who have been granted refuge and protection. The United States would continue to encourage the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to ensure that their peacekeepers and contractors were not involved in trafficking in persons.

56. Increasing gender equity and reducing gender-based violence and coercion had been factored as cross-cutting issues into all United States development assistance programmes related to health, education, democracy and governance, and economic growth. His country had also launched campaigns to raise awareness of the health consequences of female genital

mutilation, financed a new programme to prevent and treat obstetric fistula in developing countries and provided assistance to women and girls at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in post-conflict and post-natural-disaster situations.

57. The United Nations departments and bodies responsible for promoting gender equality should be restructured and the United States stood ready to work with other Member States to carry out that reform.

58. The United States had initiated a number of resolutions to support the advancement of women during the two terms of its current President and intended to continue those important efforts to defend that cause in cooperation with other Member States and in other multilateral forums.

59. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey), noting that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of France on behalf of the European Union, said that the principle of gender equality was enshrined in the Turkish Constitution, which, following the adoption of an amendment to that effect in 2004 gave to international conventions concerning fundamental rights and freedoms precedence over national laws. The Civil Code and the Penal Code had also been amended.

60. Turkey had been party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 1985 and had ratified the Optional Protocol thereto in 2002. In addition, it had recently withdrawn its declaration with respect to article 9 of the Convention and the fact that it had also withdrawn its reservations regarding articles 15 and 16 demonstrated its commitment to its international obligations.

61. **Ms. Berrah** said that, as noted by the President of the Republic on the occasion of Women's Day, her country had made swift and notable progress and was determined to fully empower Algerian women. Attitudes had changed, and taboos such as those regarding violence against women had been broken.

62. Although there was legislation for the protection of women, it had also been necessary to amend the Penal Code to reflect changing social relationships and to curb and punish sexual harassment. Under the leadership of the Ministry for the Family and the Status of Women, in cooperation with civil society and with the assistance of UNIFEM, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a number of measures had been taken, including the establishment of a centre for victims of harassment and of national shelters for girls and women who were victims of violence. Police personnel, prospective members of the armed forces and of the judiciary had also been made aware of the importance of protecting human rights and preventing conjugal and domestic violence.

63. Through inclusive and transparent dialogue, her country was focusing efforts on achieving progress in women's rights and combating all forms of violence against women. Algeria and its people stood in solidarity with women living under foreign occupation.

64. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica) said that her Government's support for the empowerment and advancement of women was evidenced by its early decision to become Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its active participation in bodies such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

65. The significant growth in the resource base of UNIFEM referred to by the Secretary-General in his report (A/63/205) demonstrated Members States' enhanced level of confidence in the work of the Organization. Her country had worked closely with UNIFEM in the context of its four priority areas and fully supported efforts aimed at strengthening gender-sensitive training for Member States. For the first time, beginning in the current year, it had made multi-year pledges to UNIFEM, and would endeavour to make voluntary contributions to other United Nations funds and programmes.

66. At the domestic level, her country was working to implement policies, plans and programmes that addressed the needs of both women and men in tangible ways, and saw gender mainstreaming as integral to its development process. At the midpoint of the implementation target for achievement of the MDGs, it had enhanced its legal and policy frameworks, improved maternal health care and services, and increased gender mainstreaming measures. Women were better represented in positions of responsibility in the public and private sectors and, according to the gender-adjusted human development index, had seen increases in life expectancy, earnings,

and enrolment ratios, in particular at institutions of higher learning.

67. In spite of her country's limited resources, women had the same opportunities as men to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the proportion of women in Jamaican contingents of United Nations peacekeeping forces had steadily risen, and was now at 50 per cent.

68. Having established a legislative framework to combat trafficking in women and girls, her country supported the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/215), and was proceeding to implement prevention measures, services for victims, and judicial and penal sanctions for perpetrators. It had established a National Task Force against Trafficking in Persons and was conducting training for various types of officials and had launched a public awareness and education campaign.

69. In line with the comprehensive approach advocated by the Secretary-General, her Government supported measures at the international level, especially under the auspices of the United Nations system, with a view to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls; gender equality required cooperation on all levels, in particular in the area of sharing information on best practices.

70. **Ms. Hoang Thi Thanh Nga** (Viet Nam), stressing the work that remained to be done despite the encouraging progress already achieved by Member States, said that her country had placed gender mainstreaming, focused both on policies and strategies relating to women and on long-term socio-economic development strategies, at the heart of its campaign for the advancement of women. With women accounting for 25.76 per cent of National Assembly deputies, their participation in political life had greatly improved in Viet Nam, which now ranked third in the Asia-Pacific region with regard to that indicator. Considerable progress had been made in the areas of education, with girls accounting for 48 per cent of primary and secondary school pupils in 2006-2007, and maternal health; the maternal mortality rate had fallen from 200 per 100,000 to 80 per 100,000 between 1990 and 2007. Lastly, women accounted for 50.2 per cent of the labour force in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture and 39.4 per cent in industry, while many more women than before held managerial positions.

71. Her country was working with the international community to put an end to all forms of violence against women and it fully endorsed the multi-year campaign launched by the Secretary-General. At the national level, administrative guidelines had been issued to facilitate the implementation of the law on the prevention of domestic violence, following its adoption, and a survey conducted in June 2008 had yielded data on that continuing problem. Courses had been organized to help women, particularly in rural areas, to understand their rights and effectively combat domestic violence; the media had also been encouraged to support the State's action. Although it was no easy task in an Asian society, her Government aimed to continue promoting gender equality.

72. **Mr. Hamzah** (Malaysia) said that since 2003 his country had been working together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in implementing gender equality programmes and projects. Malaysia, which had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and supported the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, was determined to meet its obligations in all areas and had made changes in its legal and institutional frameworks to achieve that goal. It also provided funding to help NGOs to fulfil their important role in promoting the advancement of women.

73. With regard to the issue of violence against women, while the multi-year campaign launched by the Secretary-General in February was certainly important, Member States also needed to engage in consultations with a view to adopting concrete measures. His Government, which had made that issue a priority, applied a zero tolerance policy and took a holistic approach that sought to remove impunity, prosecute the perpetrators and protect and rehabilitate the victims. It had also undertaken a review of the 1994 Domestic Violence Act and the Penal Code to provide greater deterrence for sexual offences, as well as carrying out preventive activities and opening more than 100 reception centres in public hospitals for victims of violence and sexual crimes.

74. His country was fully supportive of United Nations efforts to create a gender balance but considered that further measures needed to be taken to overcome the obstacles mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/61/318),

without losing sight of the fact that flexibility would sometimes be needed in relation to the measures adopted. Data collection was vital to the development of policies for the advancement of women and the indicators being prepared by the Statistical Commission to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women should prove very useful. His country had developed its own system for the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data, which enabled it to analyse requirements, plan actions and develop gender-responsive policies, strategies and programmes. It had also developed a gender gap index to measure gender equality in the areas of health, education, the economy and empowerment of women in a number of specific years, from 1980 to 2006.

75. His Government would continue to work to improve the status of women and would give major emphasis to gender considerations in its policies and programmes.

76. **Ms. Abubakr** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that her delegation endorsed wholeheartedly the undertaking to honour the commitments made in Beijing as well as all resolutions on women adopted at various international conferences.

77. Violence against women and policies of gender discrimination constituted the worst form of human rights violations. Women and girls suffered from violence throughout the world, whatever the ideology of their country or their social, religious or ethnic background.

78. Despite national laws and provisions of international law concerning the prohibition and elimination of violence against women, in areas affected by armed conflict, women continued to be victims of violence. The international community and the United Nations should act more resolutely to ensure that society protected victims and provided better assistance.

79. The flagrant violations of the rights of Palestinian and Arab women in the occupied territories were a cause of great concern, as was the deterioration in the situation of African women who suffered from poverty, hunger, disease and armed conflict. Her delegation firmly repudiated trafficking in women, which was a crime against humanity, and advocated enhancing international cooperation in order to end that shameful crime, which was demeaning to human dignity.

80. Women made up half of Libyan society, which was Muslim and was governed by the Islamic sharia and the Koran. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya believed in freedom and in gender equality, without distinction as to political, economic and social rights. Those principles had been incorporated into all aspects of national legislation, such as the Great Green Charter of Human Rights and were recognized in areas such as education, employment, health and in economic activities, as shown by the number of women diplomats, doctors, judges and teachers.

81. Recalling that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was one of the first countries to have adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, which it had undertaken to implement at the national level, she welcomed the activities of UNIFEM aimed at establishing policies and projects to reinforce the principle of gender equality in accordance with the MDGs.

82. **Ms. Zhang** Dan (China), calling attention to the efforts made by the international community to promote women and the measures taken by the United Nations system to mainstream gender equality, said that China had gradually incorporated gender equality and the empowerment of women into national policy, and had taken legal, economic and administrative measures to uphold the legitimate rights and interests of women, eliminate stereotypes and discrimination, and combat criminal activities that victimized women and children. The second national plan of action for advancing gender equality (2001-2010) contained 34 major goals and 100 policy measures to ensure the advancement of Chinese women, and the revised version of the 2006-2010 national development programme devoted a separate section to safeguarding the rights and interests of women.

83. There were still many obstacles to the promotion of gender equality. It had become clear to all the participants in the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals held at United Nations Headquarters in September 2008 that advancing gender equality could contribute to achieving other MDGs, but also that substantial disparities persisted among regions and within countries, despite all the progress made. It was therefore necessary to mobilize funds and take measures to overcome obstacles to the employment of women and their participation in political decision-making. With the support of the relevant international

organizations, the international community, especially developed countries, had the obligation to provide financial assistance, technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on schedule and fulfil the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

84. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia), recalling the progress made in recent years with respect to the advancement of women, owing principally to the outcome documents of the major conferences on the issue, said that it was necessary to continue strengthening gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system and to take a comprehensive approach, in close cooperation with all the United Nations entities concerned, to fulfil the commitments to gender equality and, in particular, to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal.

85. Her Government attached great importance to gender equality and the empowerment of women within the United Nations and the European Union, and was determined to intensify efforts to implement its planned strategies. To that end, it had established relevant bodies, such as the Office for Equal Opportunities, which collaborated with NGOs, and had adopted action plans to promote women's employment, reduce the gender pay gap and increase the political involvement of women at the local level, among other matters. The principle of gender-balanced representation of women and men on candidate lists for all elections had now been written into in the Constitution, and in 2006 the National Assembly Elections Act had been amended to give women greater political participation.

86. Slovenia fully supported the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women, which was a human rights violation that resulted in high social and economic costs. Her delegation attached great importance to the adoption of the draft resolution on the issue. At the national level, Slovenia had adopted several laws and implemented measures and programmes to protect victims of domestic violence. Combating trafficking in women was another important aspect of Slovenia's efforts, as demonstrated by the adoption of the action plan to fight against trafficking in human beings and help trafficking victims to overcome their trauma and seek redress. It remained crucial to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of women in all aspects of life, and to address all forms of violence against women, in order to attain the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

87. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) said that the advancement of women's rights and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were priority areas for her Government. Chile had adopted a gender equality programme designed to foster reforms of the pension system, preschool education and employment. While she welcomed the positive results produced by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women following the introduction of its new working methods, she believed that the holding of meetings in parallel working groups should remain a provisional measure, since plenary meetings were more conducive to in depth, multidisciplinary and transparent analysis of country reports.

88. Chile condemned all forms of violence against women and on 23 September 2008 had joined the campaign entitled "Say NO to Violence against Women" launched by UNIFEM in support of the Secretary-General's related initiative. Her country continued to undertake a number of projects on the matter, some of which were described in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/214). In addition, Chile had been a sponsor of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence in armed conflict. Her delegation, which had also sponsored General Assembly resolution 62/138, endorsed the recommendations set forth in paragraph 64 (a) of the Secretary-General's report on ending obstetric fistula. In that regard, she welcomed the concerted efforts to prevent maternal mortality, along with recent commitments made by participants at the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals to expedite progress towards achieving Goal 5, and at the side event on Goals 4 and 5 jointly chaired by Chile. In light of the promising national maternal and infant health indicators, the President of Chile had launched a campaign to eliminate maternal and infant mortality in Latin America.

89. She welcomed the activities, described in the UNIFEM report (A/63/205), especially its administration of the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, the recommendations made by the UNIFEM Consultative

Committee at its forty-eighth session (see chapter V of the report) and the Fund's biennial report.

90. Her delegation, which had played a proactive role in the negotiations on women's advancement in the United Nations system, welcomed the recent adoption of General Assembly resolution 62/277, but would like further information on the "composite entity" option mentioned therein. Given her delegation's desire to continue contributing to the reform of the system, it welcomed the adoption by consensus of Human Rights Council resolution 6/30, which it had introduced.

91. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that the dignity and status of women were moral imperatives and guiding principles of an egalitarian and progressive society. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which remained the guiding policy frameworks for gender equality and the empowerment of women, acknowledged that eliminating gender discrimination, violence against women and equal participation of women in the social, economic and political life of societies were prerequisites for successful and sustainable development as well as crucial milestones in the efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

92. Given that poverty and underdevelopment were closely linked, he stressed the importance of focusing immediate attention on the plight of women in rural areas, in conflict situations and in territories under foreign occupation. The plight of migrant and trafficked women and those affected by unilateral coercive measures must also be urgently addressed. The Pakistani Constitution guaranteed equal rights for all its citizens and ensured full participation of women in all spheres of national life. The current democratic Government gave top priority to the empowerment of women, who represented 49 per cent of the population. He cited various figures to underscore the high rate of participation of women in all spheres of national life, noting that Pakistan was proud to have a female Speaker of the National Assembly and female parliamentarians who had become a collective and visible force that participated in decision-making at the highest level.

93. His Government had adopted numerous measures to promote women's advancement, such as the 1998 National Plan of Action, which touched upon all twelve areas of concern addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action. It had also taken a series of institutional and administrative measures aimed at creating a zero-tolerance environment in respect of violence against women. Lastly, he emphasized the need to strengthen global partnerships and to honour commitments to Official Development Assistance in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

94. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal) stressed the interlinkages between the advancement of women and economic growth, which led some to assert that the elimination of inequalities between the sexes was a prerequisite for sustainable development. Realization of Millennium Goal 3 was thus also dependent on realization of Millennium Goal 1. To that end, developed countries must provide the assistance necessary to developing countries, who must make concerted efforts in that regard.

95. Senegal had adopted new policies and measures to advance women. Its new Constitution guaranteed gender equity and equality, and it was in the process of removing discriminatory provisions from national legislation. Work was also under way on a national strategy to ensure that men and women participated equally in the country's development. Discrimination was also being combated in the field of health, in particular to protect women and girls living with HIV/AIDS. The Government had also recently adopted a road map to combat maternal mortality, which aimed to accelerate the realization of the MDGs thanks to a budget of 65 billion CFA francs.

96. Despite all efforts to strengthen the role of women in development, much remained to be done, requiring increased mobilization by the international community. Senegal would once again be submitting a draft resolution on obstetric fistula. She recalled that the text had been adopted without a vote in 2007 and hoped that it would receive the support of all Member States.

97. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that inequalities between the sexes impeded realization of the MDGs; the practical aspects of protecting and advancing women should continue to be priorities in existing legislation. The role of the Commission on the Status of Women, the main coordinating body in the United Nations system for protecting women's rights, should be enhanced. The campaign launched by the

Secretary-General was vital, and it was symbolic that it had been designed for the period until 2015, since that was the timeline set for the achievement of the MDGs. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's view that the lack of a single common approach towards ending violence against women provided an opportunity for each State to develop its own strategy in that area.

98. The advancement of women was a priority of the Government's social policy, which aimed to help women balance their work and family lives, in particular through a national strategy for gender equality in the social, economic, political, education and cultural spheres and in decision-making.

99. The protection of mothers and children was a major focus, and the President of the Russian Federation had declared 2008 the Year of the Family. Enhancing the status and role of family in society should strengthen the protection of mothers and children and stabilize the demographic situation. The Government had also taken measures to reduce maternal and child mortality and to protect the reproductive health of women and raise the birth rate. Benefits were paid to mothers, including in the form of pregnancy and childcare allowances; assistance to housewives was paid out of a social insurance fund, reflecting the Government's recognition of motherhood as fully fledged work. Significant efforts had been made in all regions to establish a medical care system for women in childbirth and to modernize existing maternity wards and build 28 perinatal centres. Those measures were already yielding visible results: in 2007, 8 per cent more children were born than in 2006, and that trend was continuing in 2008.

100. Combating all forms of violence against women and children was another focus of government policy, and a number of amendments had been introduced to ensure harsher punishments, including for crimes of sexual violence. Law-enforcement practice was monitored by social organizations, especially by women's NGOs. Victims of violence were eligible for free and anonymous assistance from public or private establishments and many crisis centres had been established to work in close contact with the authorities, providing medical care, psychological support and social rehabilitation.

101. Despite the clear progress achieved, much remained to be done to achieve gender equality and eradicate violence against women. The Russian Federation stood ready to cooperate with the international community and would continue to contribute to efforts in that area.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.